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LETTER DATED 11 MARCH 1998 FROM THE DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to draw to your attention the text of a statement on Kosovo agreed by the members of the Contact Group at their meeting in London on 9 March 1998.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) S. J. GOMERSALL
Deputy Permanent Representative

Annex

Statement on Kosovo adopted by the members of the Contact Group, meeting in London on 9 March 1998

1. We, the Foreign Ministers of the Contact Group countries, together with representatives of the European Commission and the Office of the High Representative, met in London on 9 March 1998 to discuss the increasingly tense situation in Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and the unacceptable use of force over recent days. The Balkans region has seen too much bloodshed in recent years or the international community to stand aside.

2. We recalled that when we met in New York on 24 September 1997, we voiced deep concern over developments in Kosovo and called upon the authorities in Belgrade and the leadership of the Kosovar Albanian community to join in a peaceful dialogue. We are dismayed that in the period since September, rather than taking steps to reduce tensions or to enter without preconditions into dialogue towards a political solution, the Belgrade authorities have applied repressive measures in Kosovo. We note with particular concern the recent violence in Kosovo, resulting in at least 80 fatalities, and condemn the use of excessive force by Serbian police against civilians, and against peaceful demonstrators in Pristina on 2 March.

3. Our condemnation of the actions of the Serbian police should not in any way be mistaken for an endorsement of terrorism. Our position on this is clear. We wholly condemn terrorist actions by the Kosovo Liberation Army or any other group or individual. Those in the Kosovar Albanian community who speak for the different political constituencies should make it clear that they, too, abhor terrorism. We insist likewise that those outside the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia who are supplying finance, arms or training for terrorist activity in Kosovo should immediately cease doing so.

4. We condemn the large-scale police actions of the last 10 days that further inflamed an already volatile situation. The violent repression of non-violent expression of political views is completely indefensible. We call upon the authorities in Belgrade to invite independent forensic experts to investigate the very serious allegations of extrajudicial killings. If these accusations are borne out, we expect the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to prosecute and punish those responsible.

5. Our commitment to human rights values means that we cannot ignore such disproportionate methods of control. Government authorities have a special responsibility to protect the human and civil rights of all citizens and to ensure that public security forces act judiciously and with restraint.

6. In the light of the deplorable violence in Kosovo, we feel compelled to take steps to demonstrate to the authorities in Belgrade that they cannot defy international standards without facing severe consequences. The Contact Group has decided to take a broad range of actions to address the current situation on an urgent basis. The Contact Group welcomes the continuation of consultations in the United Nations Security Council, in view of the implications of the

situation in Kosovo for regional security. Against that background, the Contact Group:

- Requests a mission to Kosovo by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;

- Urges the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia to begin gathering information related to the violence in Kosovo that may fall within its jurisdiction. The authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have an obligation to cooperate with the International Tribunal. Contact Group countries will make available to the Tribunal substantiated relevant information in their possession;

- Supports the proposal for a new mission by Felipe Gonzalez as the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that would include a new and specific mandate for addressing the problems in Kosovo;

- Supports the return of the OSCE long-term missions to Kosovo, the Sandjak and Vojvodina;

- Recommends that the Special Session of the OSCE Permanent Council meeting on 11 March arrange for embassies in Belgrade of OSCE participating States to intensify their visits to Kosovo so as to provide for a continuous presence;

- Will continue vigorously to support the efforts of Sant'Egidio to secure implementation of the Education Agreement and to identify resources to assist a fair and acceptable arrangement;

- Proposes the establishment of an international consortium including non-governmental organizations that would promote the building of a civil society in Kosovo and the distribution of humanitarian assistance;

- Recognizing that neighbouring countries of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have legitimate security concerns stemming from violence and unrest in Kosovo, will arrange an urgent meeting of the Contact Group with representatives of Governments in the region to discuss the grave consequences of an inter-ethnic conflict and its possible spillover to other parts of the region. We expect them to do all in their power to prevent support for terrorism. The meeting will in particular address:

  - The possible despatch of a short-term OSCE monitoring group to enhance the ability of the Albania mission's Shkodra field office to monitor the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Kosovo) border;

  - The possible strengthening of the present OSCE mission in Skopje;

- Recommends that consideration be given to adapting the current mandate of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP), and would support the maintenance of an international military presence on the ground in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia when the current mandate of UNPREDEP expires;

- Will monitor the situation in Kosovo by frequent joint visits to Pristina by Contact Group and other representatives.

7. At the same time, it is not enough for the killing to stop; too much damage has already been done to human life and to the credibility of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Because of the gravity of the situation, we endorse the following measures, to be pursued immediately:

(a) Consideration by the Security Council of a comprehensive arms embargo against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including Kosovo;

(b) Refusal to supply equipment to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia which might be used for internal repression, or for terrorism;

(c) Denial of visas for senior Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbian representatives responsible for repressive action by security forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in Kosovo;

(d) A moratorium on government-financed export credit support for trade and investment, including government financing for privatizations, in Serbia.

The Contact Group notes that the Russian Federation cannot support measures (c) and (d) above for immediate imposition. But if there is no progress towards the steps called for by the Contact Group, the Russian Federation will then be willing to discuss all the above measures.

We call upon President Milosevic to take rapid and effective steps to stop the violence and engage in a commitment to find a political solution to the issue of Kosovo through dialogue. Specifically, he should within 10 days:

- Withdraw the special police units and cease action by the security forces affecting the civilian population;

- Allow access to Kosovo for the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations as well as by representatives of the Contact Group and other embassies;

- Commit himself publicly to begin a process of dialogue, along the lines of paragraph 10, with the leadership of the Kosovar Albanian community;

- Cooperate in a constructive manner with the Contact Group in the implementation of the actions specified in paragraph 6 above which require action by the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

If President Milosevic takes these steps, we will immediately reconsider the measures we have now adopted. If he fails to take these steps, and repression continues in Kosovo, the Contact Group will move to further international measures, and specifically to pursue a freeze on the funds held abroad by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbian Governments.

The Contact Group has decided to meet again on 25 March 1998 to assess the response of the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

8. Belgrade's own actions have seriously set back the process of normalization of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's relations with the international community. Unless the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia takes steps to resolve the serious political and human rights issues in Kosovo, there is no prospect of any improvement in its international standing. On the other hand, concrete progress to resolve the serious political and human rights issues in Kosovo will improve the international position of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and prospects for normalization of its international relationships and full rehabilitation in international institutions.

9. No one should misunderstand our position on the core issue involved. We support neither independence nor the maintenance of the status quo. As we have set out clearly, the principles for a solution of the Kosovo problem should be based upon the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and be in accordance with OSCE standards, the Helsinki principles and the Charter of the United Nations. Such a solution also must take into account the rights of the Kosovo Albanians and all those who live in Kosovo. We support an enhanced status for Kosovo within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia which a substantially greater degree of autonomy would bring and recognize that this must include meaningful self-administration.

10. The way to defeat terrorism in Kosovo is for Belgrade to offer the Kosovar Albanian community a genuine political process. The authorities in Belgrade and the leadership of the Kosovar Albanian community must assume their responsibility to enter without preconditions into a meaningful dialogue on political status issues. The Contact Group stands ready to facilitate such a dialogue.

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